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The Mysterious Ileka

By Edna S. Knapp

In Five Parts

CHAPTER II

MARGARET could think with lightning quickness when it was necessary. Naturally timid, another's danger made her brave. She hated snakes and nothing had ever given her such a feeling of repulsion as this creature almost at her feet. She wanted to run or to scream. Yet she must keep cool and do something quickly. The boys were too far off to give any immediate help. Dorothy was too frightened not to keep quiet.

Margaret spoke to her friend. "Don't stir and you're safe. I've always heard a rattler won't move unless the person he's looking at does."

Dorothy heard but her anguished eyes were meeting the unwinking gaze of the reptile.

"Whohoo!" called Margaret clearly and Henry answered and started back at once. Making sure that the snake was still watching Dorothy, Margaret went cautiously in the direction of a small pile of sticks left by some picnic party that had evidently had a fire in this glade and luckily had provided themselves with more fuel than they had needed. Would the reptile keep quiet where it was? Would the biggest stick be large enough to kill the creature? Suppose she did not get it in time, suppose the stick was dead wood and broke under the strain? That few yards to the woodpile was by far the longest distance Margaret had ever traversed, her feet seemed weighted with lead. In spite of her frantic desire for speed, she had never seemed so slow nor so clumsy and she wanted to be so swift and so silent. She was fully alive to the fact that her errand was a dangerous one.

She reached the woodpile, seized the biggest branch she could handle and found it long enough. She tested it and knew it to be sound, then swiftly retraced her steps, praying as she ran. The boys were returning but would not reach the spot as soon as she could.

Yes, the snake was still lying coiled where she had left it, still holding Dorothy with its baleful gaze. Margaret

raised the stick above her head and struck with all her might. In the instant the blow was falling came the thought, "What if I should miss?"

By a lucky accident, or a special Providence, she hit the ugly head and held it flat to the ground. That was all she could do, just hang onto the stick until the boys came. They brought other clubs and the reptile was very dead indeed when Henry and Dick got through with it.

Dorothy was too unnerved to speak when the danger was over. "Let's go home," begged Margaret, trembling, now that she could think of herself.

"Guess we'd better. Who'd ever have dreamed of a fracas like that our first day," exclaimed Henry. He looked solicitously at the two girls and laid his hand for an instant on Margaret's arm. "Pretty plucky of you, Cousin," he added gruffly.

Dick had a supporting arm around Dorothy but he turned his freckled face to say, "I'll tell you what I think of you later, Margaret. We—we're grateful, you know we are."

The return trip was made in silence and it was the boys who told the story to Uncle Henry and Aunt Sue. Aunt Sue petted the girls and soothed them, while Uncle Henry spoke decidedly.

"There isn't one chance in a thousand of such a thing happening again but you girls aren't going to run any risks. Don't ever go into the brush or long grass outside clearings unless the boys have beaten the ground first. Promise me this, all of you. The four gladly promised and Uncle Henry nodded his satisfaction.

Then Aunt Sue spoke. "The Gaylords were over from the hotel this morning. They want to take you four to Tarpon Springs to see the sponge fishing tomorrow afternoon. They're leaving the next day."

The boys and girls exchanged quick glances of pleasure. The Gaylords were a delightful couple and this promised an interesting expedition. The conversation after supper turned to sponges.

"Tarpon Springs is the biggest sponge market in the world," said Aunt Sue.



SPONGES JUST UNLOADED FROM THE SPONGE-FISHING VESSELS

Courtesy of Nature Magazine, Washington, D. C.

"We know that much," remarked Dick. "I think there's a large Greek settlement there and the Greeks do the fishing."

"Remember the lot of packing houses we passed coming out on the bus?" asked Henry of Margaret.

"Yes, and the streets were full of Greeks too," replied his cousin.

"The tourists don't like to have so many around town," commented Dorothy, repeating what she had heard at the hotel.

"We'll know more tomorrow," laughed Margaret as they said good-night. She was completely herself again but Dorothy was still shaky from her experience of the afternoon.

"There won't be anything to get scared about tomorrow," promised Margaret to comfort her friend.

"What are we going to do this afternoon?" asked Dick after breakfast next morning.

"What do you want to do?" returned timid Dorothy, still quaking inwardly.

"Go up the river and find that haunted house," replied Dick.

"Come on, girls. We'll be safe enough and you know Uncle Henry said yesterday's scare was one chance in a thousand," urged Henry.

Dorothy hesitated and looked pleadingly at Margaret. "You needn't leave the boat," said Margaret. "And I'll stay right with you. Now will you come?"

So Dorothy reluctantly agreed. They found the Chasco river entirely different in its narrowing upper reaches. There were very few houses above the bridge and presently they found themselves in the heart of fairyland. There was nothing to disturb the placid surface and the reflections seemed more perfect than the landscape itself. In and out wound the little river, the scenery becoming lovelier with every bend. Tall tree ferns lined the banks, palmettoes bent to see themselves in the smiling water, a lazy alligator lay sunning himself on a bank.

"He's so exactly the color of the roots that we nearly missed seeing him," commented Margaret.

As they swept around the longest curve yet, they were surprised to see hauled up on a grassy bank a white boat with "Ileka" painted on the bow. There was no house for miles, no people but themselves in this wilderness and here lay this fine boat apparently abandoned yet in perfect condition so far as they could judge.

"Halloa, here's the mystery boat," exclaimed Henry. "Come on, Dick, let's look her over." They scrambled out onto the bank and thoroughly inspected the hull, calling down their discoveries to the two girls in the rowboat.

"She's been there at least four years and a half, Mr. Wharton said," remarked Dorothy.

"I thought things rotted quickly in this climate," said Margaret.

"She looks sort of old but seems sound and seaworthy all over," reported Henry when he returned.

"I don't understand how she got here nor why she was abandoned," spoke Dick. "Want to go home, Dorothy? Had enough of the river for today?"

Dorothy nodded without speaking so the boat was headed for home and they speculated all the way on a possible history for the Ileka, stranded here in the wilderness.

Right after dinner the Gaylord's car appeared. Uncle Henry was obsessed with a story idea which he must get onto paper. Aunt Sue was still arranging and re-arranging the furnishings of the livingroom to suit herself. So the four young folks went adventuring.

The big car whirled the party swiftly over the miles of hard road to Tarpon Springs. On the edge of the town they stopped at a packing house which was open.

"I can't show you anything but bales of sponges ready to ship. These weigh from fifteen to fifty pounds. Yes; they are compressed into the bales. Those bins are full of sponges of different grades and sizes," said the courteous man in charge.

"What do you do to the sponges after they get here?" asked Dick.

"Trim them into shape, sort them and pack them," replied Mr. Demetrios. "You ought to go down to the wharf because the fleet is in today for Epiphany. You'll see so much more there. Go right down that first street to the left, sir."

The party were soon at the dock where a mountain of sponges were being unloaded. They went on board the nearest fishing boat, a craft of perhaps fifty tons displacement, one of the largest in the business. Two divers were aboard. The crew were friendly and the young people learned many things. They inspected the diving suits weighing two hundred pounds, the curious kettle-shaped headgear, the shoes with their weighted leaden soles.

"With these suits we can go down in all sorts of weather. We go down one or two hundred feet and can stay down two hours. We pick the sponges off the bottom, you know," explained one diver who spoke excellent English.

"The law lets us pick sponges as small as six inches in diameter when they're wet. The little ones grow an inch or so a year and we get them another time, see?" went on the man with a smile.

"What do you do to the sponges after you get them on deck, anything?" asked Henry, smiling his own infectious smile at the diver.

The brown-faced Greek waved both hands towards the other men. "I do nothing but dive. The others do much. They tread hard on the sponges barefooted for a long time, then they wash them much, then keep them a long time in the 'crawls,' too."

At this point one of the owners came aboard and took the party in charge. He explained that the sponges were full

of a gelatinous matter which had to be gotten out by treading, by washing and by exposure to the sun and air. Part of this process was done on board the boats and part in the "crawls" or enclosures in shallow water near the shore where the sponges were exposed until they were properly cleaned. Then they were landed on the wharf to be sold under a competitive system of buying.

Thanking their kind hosts, our party left the wharf and drove into the center of the town to a curio store where they saw sponges of all sizes and shapes. Here the shop keeper told them the names of each sort and added various bits of information to what they had already received. Sponges wore out first at the foot where they were attached to the ocean floor. One big company had learned to "vulcanize" so as to use the pieces and could cure a misshaped sponge without showing. There was a rivalry between them and the Key West fishermen who fished with poles and water-telescopes. The Tarpon Springs Greeks used diving suits. The Key fishers said the divers trampled on young sponges and did much harm. The Greeks had brought over their own customs from the Aegean Islands. Their Greek-cross ceremony was so picturesque that it had been filmed. Of course the party would see that tomorrow?

"Of course," agreed the Gaylords, making up their minds at once. Then they bought a liberal amount of curios and started homeward. Down by the Springs Bayou decorations were everywhere.

"There'll be another good time tomorrow," rejoiced Dorothy and Margaret as they reached The Shack.

After supper that night Henry drew Margaret one side. "Have you any stuff to take off paint?" he asked. "I've got some on my other trousers."

"Paint," echoed Margaret. "Why no. Where'd you find any?"

"Rubbed against a place on the Ileka. I forgot all about it because Dorothy was so crazy to get home and we were late. I found a spot patched with new wood, and then painted over to look sort of old. The paint wasn't dry. I ran my finger over it to make sure."

"Somebody wants that boat to look old yet is keeping it repaired," exclaimed Margaret. "What can that mean?"

"Search me," said Henry.

(To be continued)

A. January Suggestion

BY HELEN COWLES LE CRON

I know a jolly winter game—we'll watch the birds, my dear;

We'll put some crumbs and suet out and watch them gather here!

We'll look them up and learn their names, and maybe, in the end,

We'll come to know them very well, and count each one a friend.

The Portal.

Centenary of a Famous Soldier

BY MAUDE GARDNER

JANUARY 21, 1924, marks the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of a man whose memory is loved and cherished, not only by the Southland, which he served so well, but by people everywhere who reverence greatness and goodness, for "Stonewall" Jackson was not only one of the most brilliant and successful generals in the history of America, but at all times, in all places and in every act of his life, a Christian gentleman, who left an untarnished memory behind him.

Thomas J. Jackson was born at Clarksburg, West Virginia, on Jan. 21, 1824, and in that vicinity spent his boyhood and youth, but Lexington, Va., the historic little town situated on a branch of the James River in the beautiful valley of Virginia, is the place most intimately associated with his later life. Here is situated the Virginia Military Institute, sometimes called the "West Point of the South," in which institution T. J. Jackson gave up a professorship to enter the Confederate Army. The soil of Lexington cradles the dust of the great Southern leader, and his old home, hallowed by memories of the happiest years of his life, has been converted into a memorial hospital.

It was a fitting tribute to "Stonewall" Jackson, when the Daughters of the Confederacy purchased his home and converted it into the Jackson Memorial Hospital. If the great, kind heart could know, how he would rejoice at this act of devotion in making of the place he loved so well an institution for suffering to be alleviated and miracles of healing performed.

Thomas J. Jackson's boyhood and youth were much like that of other boys, and no one dreamed that he would ever be distinguished as a great soldier. At West Point he received his training for a military life and after graduation was sent to Mexico, where, under General Winfield Scott, our young hero took part in the battle of Vera Cruz—his first real encounter with war, and sometime later was made a Major for his bravery at Chapultepec. But in 1851 ill health caused him to resign from the army, and he was soon after made professor of military science and tactics in the Military Institute at Lexington, which position he held until the terrible war between the States broke out, and Thomas J. Jackson offered his sword to the Southern Confederacy.

It was on July 21, 1861, that his great career began and the day that he was nicknamed "Stonewall"—a name by which the great General is best known today. The Battle of Manassas will always recall that hot July day when for six hours the sound of shot and shell echoed across the Virginia hills and when at last the Confederate troops were retreating, one of the Generals noticed that



JACKSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, LEXINGTON, VA.

Jackson and his men still held their ground. "Look at Jackson's brigade! There it stands like a stone wall!" he shouted, and following his example, the troops gained fresh courage, the battle was resumed, and soon the Union forces were driven from the field.

And ever after the gallant officer was known as "Stonewall Jackson." He became one of the most successful generals of the war and no man in the army was more beloved than he. His genius was a wonderful aid to General Lee for no other could execute the designs of the Southern commander with Jackson's judgment and swiftness. He was one of the chief hopes of the Confederacy, and it was through his ingenuity that one of the most brilliant Confederate victories was won at Chancellorsville, but a victory that struck at Southern hearts for in the struggle in the pine woods, "Stonewall" Jackson was mistaken by his own men for an enemy and fired upon.

And even though he realized that he was perhaps mortally wounded, the brave heart, which thought only of the cause for which he had given his life, seeing that his men were forming for a charge, hid his face so that they might not know that he was wounded. An improvised litter was made, and the beloved Southern leader carried from the field to a hospital and a few days later removed to the home of Mr. Chandler, where he died on May 10, 1863.

Today as the train winds through the beautiful Virginia country from Fredericksburg to Washington, a little white house that stands near the railroad at Guinea Station is pointed out to strangers as the place where the South's hero passed away. The railroad owns the little building, which is kept as a sacred shrine because it was there that Stonewall Jackson waged his last great battle against death and lost. No more beautiful story is told than that of Stonewall Jackson's last days on earth. Always a man of faith and of prayer, in these last days of suffering, his marvelous trust

sustained him, and his last words were: "Let us pass over the river and rest under the shade of the trees."

No greater blow could have struck the South than "Stonewall" Jackson's death. Lee's "right hand" was thus taken away, and just at a time when it was needed most. There were other generals, brave and true, but none who possessed the gift of his keen insight, his wonderful certainty of victory and the power that drew men's hearts to him.

Stonewall Jackson's name has been handed down through the years as the South's fallen hero, but his fame is not confined to his own country alone. Even across the Atlantic the plans of his battles of Manassas and Chancellorsville are studied by military men and used by them as models of strategy and tactics. All people who speak the English language are proud that the greatest military genius of their time belongs to them—Stonewall Jackson, a mighty soldier and a Christian warrior.

Kitten in the Snow

BY ELEANOR W. F. BATES

IN the early morning the door stood wide,
And he arched his back and he sprang outside
With a "Prrraow!" He was born in May,
and so
The kitten had never yet seen the snow.

A deep drift, made in the night by the
gale,
Covered him all but his whisking tail,
And he plunged and struggled, the wind
blew so—
The kitten who never had seen the snow.

Glad to get back by the fireside's blaze,
He washed his soft paws in a sort of a
daze;
"Why, I thought they were little white
feathers—but no!"
Purred the kitten who never had seen
the snow.



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809 NINTH STREET,
SIOUX CITY, IOWA.

Dear Miss Buck:—I would like very much to be a member of the Beacon Club. I am eight years old. I go to Irving School and I am in the third grade. My school-teacher's name is Miss Foley. I belong to the First Unitarian Church of Sioux City. Our minister is Rev. Charles E. Snyder.

Yours sincerely,

ELINOR WAKEFIELD.

91 SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET,
HINSDALE, ILLS.

Dear Miss Buck:—I go to the Unitarian Church in Hinsdale. I am ten years old and am in the fifth grade at school. We get *The Beacon* every Sunday and I enjoy it very much. I will be very proud to wear the pin. I should like to correspond with some girl that is my own age and around who belongs to the Club. I have no brothers or sisters. I like the purpose of the Beacon Club and will try to carry it out.

Sincerely yours,

DELLA FURZER.

Church School News

Mr. Eliot C. French, Superintendent of our school at Canton, Mass., sends printed report cards at the end of each month to the parents of the children in the school. These cards record the attendance, deportment and scholarship, tell the material that has been covered in the class during the month, and give an opportunity for some special comment. The report is signed by the teacher of the class, Secretary of the school, and the Superintendent. Experience has taught these workers that better results are secured through sending these reports by mail directly to the parents than in trying to have them carried home by the pupils. The numbers in this school are growing, as is indicated by the fact that added subscriptions for *THE BEACON* were recently made necessary in order to supply all the members of the school with copies.

Many of our schools are now giving especial attention to training the different departments in singing the hymns and carols. Our excellent school at Cleveland, Ohio, has a trained musical director, Miss Anderson, for the Intermediate Department, who has greatly improved the singing in the service of worship of that department. Miss Mary Hughes of Laurel School has recently taken charge of the music in the Junior Church and will train a choir to assist in the conduct of its services. In this school also a director from the Play House was secured for the production of the Christmas play which included both adults and children.

The church school at Indianapolis, Ind.,

Dear Miss Buck:—I am interested in *The Beacon* and in the Beacon Club and would like to belong very much. I am eleven years of age and would like to correspond with some other boy my age.

Yours very truly,

JOSEPH A. FRAME.

144 WEBSTER STREET,
ROCKLAND, MASS.

HUBBARDSTON, MASS.

Dear Miss Buck:

I go to the Unitarian Church at Hubbardston. Sometimes I go to Worcester to visit my cousin and then I go to Court Hill Church. I get *The Beacon* every Sunday. I like to read the stories in it and work out the puzzles. I would like to become a member of the Beacon Club. They had a Club here last year and I enjoyed making toys. I am twelve years old. There are six boys in our class. Mrs. Clark is my teacher and I like her very much.

Yours truly,

KENNETH HALLOCK.

Other new members in Massachusetts are Helen E. Wright and Edith Ruthford, Bridgewater; Lucile Mahoney and Gertrude Roscoe, West Bridgewater; Mary Vander Haegen, Dorchester; Sanford Hatheway, Fall River; John Studley, Hingham Center; Alda Hanlon, Hudson; Constance H. Whitney, Lancaster; Dorothy A. Bodman, Alfred Conrad, Lloyd and Marion Wheeler, Marlboro; James A. Carey, Norwell; Barbara Simmons, Wellesley Hills.

had a perfect attendance of 39 members during the month of October, and welcomed eleven new members that month. The pupils and friends of the school contributed an offering of fruit for the colored orphans' home, a custom which has been observed for many years at Thanksgiving time.

A fine project has been voted by the members of the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield, N. J. The trustees of that society have been authorized to engage upon a campaign to secure funds for the erection of a parish house to be ready at the earliest practicable time. The needs of the Sunday school for larger quarters and better equipment is the first reason given for this step on the part of the church.

Under the direction of Mrs. Algernon S. Smith, the church school field worker, a Thanksgiving pageant written by Miss Annie E. Pousland was given by the Bridgewater church school. The baskets of fruit and flowers used in the pageant were afterward sent to the sick and shut-ins of the school and church. Miss Anna Keith is training the church choir. They are to sing a hymn every Sunday in church just after the sermon, as well as to lead the singing of the school.

In Winchendon, Mass., the Christmas pageant arranged by Mrs. Russell Tower, entitled "The Light of the World" was given by the children of the church school under the direction of Mrs. Algernon Smith. Miss Frances Smith as the First Angel, and Mrs. William Hildreth as Mary were the soloists.

The schools of Bridgewater, Barre, and Winchendon, Mass., have all been reorganized and graded by Mrs. Smith.

RECREATION CORNER.

ENIGMA XXXI.

I am composed of 35 letters.
My 3, 27, 30, 31, 29, is a part of every rose.
My 25, 9, 10, 14, is a division of time.
My 4, 28, 30, 7, is used in warm clothing.
My 32, 13, 16, 33, 29, is a high-school study.
My 2, 17, 18, 20, 19, is joyousness.
My 22, 21, 24, 25, is a narrow and thin piece of wood.
My 35, 34, 23, 6, is to dispose of at a price.
My 12, 26, 11, 15, is saucy.
My 8, 5, is a pronoun used in olden times.
My whole is a line from Pope's *Essay on Man*.

M. W. S.

EIGHT "ATES"

(Each word ends in "ate")

1. The ignorant "ate".
2. The undecided "ate".
3. The clustered "ate".
4. The "ate" of thinness.
5. The powerful "ate".
6. The "ate" of pity.
7. The "ate" of substitution.
8. The "ate" of foresight.

The Target.

CHARADE.

My first is present, my next is past,
And each is done with the eye;
My whole is ridden both high and low,
With pleasure low and high.
It travels up and it travels down
But never a foot 'twixt town and town,
Never an inch on any road,
But ever briskly up and down
It bears its happy load.

Youth's Companion.

TRANSFORMATIONS

I am composed of seven letters. Complete I am of little worth but often powerful enough to cause great trouble, and also great joy and happiness. Curtail me, mix the remaining up and I am used to elevate. Eliminate one letter, change others about and I am an unstable creature. Eliminate another letter and I move lightly and swiftly. Eliminate one more letter and I am appropriate. Behold me and I undoubtedly am it. Curtail me and I am the ego.

Scattered Seeds.

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES IN NO. 14

ENIGMA XXVII.—Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

ENIGMA XXVIII.—Praise ye the Lord.

BEHEADING PUZZLE.—B-ore

A-rose
T-each
H-ate
S-old
H-arm
E-vent
B-all
A-board

BATHSHEBA.

TWO ANIMALS.—ACT
LOT
PUN
AGE
CAR
ART

ALPACA
COUGAR

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